ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. W. D. L. Ride and Dr. G. M. Storr of Western Australian Museum, and Dr. D. L. Serventy of the C.S.I.R.O. Division of Wildlife Research, for advice and assistance in identification during the preparation of this paper. The plants were identified at the W.A. Herbarium.

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EXCURSIONS

YUNDURUP DELTA ISLANDS

Since November 1967 members of the Western Australian Naturalists' Club have been making observations on the fauna and flora on the islands of the Murray River delta at Yundurup, mainly on Culcenup (or Mill) Island. During the weekend of April 25-27, 1969 an organized Club exeursion to the area was held, under the leadership of the President, Mr. D. R. Reid. A similar excursion was conducted a year later, April 10-14, 1970. On both oceasions Mr. and Mrs. John Oldham made available their eottage at Lot 26, Culeenup 1., as headquarters of the expeditions.

So promising was the area regarded for sustained natural history observations, in a wide variety of fields, that it was decided to initiate moves for a permanent field station there. Accordingly, after preliminary inquiries to the Surveyor-General, Mr. John Morgan, the President made

inquiries to the Surveyor-General, Mr. John Morgan, the President made a formal request on June 9, 1969 to the Lands and Surveys Department for a grant of land for the purpose. This was favourably entertained and after further correspondence, detailing the Club's intentions, the Governor in Council approved that Lots 8 and 9 on Culcenup Island, being Reserve No. 5613, and totalling one aere in area, "should vest in and be held by the Western Australian Naturalists' Club in trust for the purpose of a Field Station" (vide Government Gazette, May 8, 1970).

There are nine river channels and eight islands in the delta of the Murray River. Three of the islands have been examined by Club parties—Culcenup, Jeegarnyeejip (or Reserve) and Mecyip Is., with most attention being paid to the first-named. Mr D. R. Reid specialised in the geomorphology of the area, Miss E. Kniep organized the botanical collections and Dr. D. L. Serventy collated the bird observations of the various parties. Most of the visits have been made in the summer and autumn, with a minimum in the winter and spring; no visits at all were made in the importminimum in the winter and spring; no visits at all were made in the important months of September and October when there is a general flowering of the native flora. The following report is a consolidated account of the results obtained to date, both of the organized and individual visits to the delta, and may be regarded as the first report of the Club's field station.

GEOMORPHOLOGY

Report by D. R. Reid: Yundurup is the only typical delta on the eoast, and is really a double delta, for both the Serpentine and Murray Rivers debouch into Peel Inlet close together. The delta resulted from an accumulation of sediments, more than the sea could remove. Deltas are self-destructive and aerial photographs clearly show reliet or "fossil" channels of the Murray north and south of the present channel systems at Yundurup. The salt pans on the islands and adjoining mainland are dismembered parts of former extensions of Peel Inlet. The islands show interesting structures. The relatively high levee banks along their margins were formed at periods of high flood level, when the flood waters, spreading out, abruptly dropped the coarser parts of their load.

HYDROLOGY

In the summer months the delta channels are filled with sea-water. The salinity is reduced and the water becomes brackish in April and May when the Murray River starts to run strongly with the onset of the autumn rains. In the winter and spring the surface water is fresh, brown and opaque.

The Salt Lake, at the north-western end of Culeenup Island, holds

water only in the winter months.

The freshwater swamp, north of the water tower on Lot 31 (Government reserve), is also ephemeral, earrying surface water, of shallow depth, only between June and October.

BOTANY

Owing to the nature of the terrain several plants characteristic of the adjoining parts of the coastal plain are absent from the islands. The only Eucalyptus is the Flooded Gum (E. rudis), though a closely similar tree, at present regarded by botanists as the same species, is under investigation. Miss Kniep first drew attention to the fact that it differed from typical rudis by the possession of narrower leaves and appeared to start flowering earlier. There are no Jarrah, Marri, Christmas Tree or Blackboys, and only one Banksia species was found; it had a restricted distribution on Culcenup Island.

The following list, of 66 native and 10 introduced species, covers the collections of plants made by members on various visits between July 1968 and November 1969, and identified at the Western Australian Herbarium. The known flowering dates on the islands are given in brackets. The list will be considerably expanded by collections in the spring, when there is a general flowering of plants, but hitherto very few visits then have been

made by members.

GYMNOSPERMAE

Cycadaceae

Macrozamia reidlei (Gaud.) C. A. Gardn. (Zamia Palm). Plentiful on Culcenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Cupressaceae

Actinostrobus pyranidalis Miq. (Swamp Cypress). Only one tree known to occur, on Jeegarnyeejip I., opposite Lot 33 on Culeenup I.

ANGIOSPERMAE

MONOCOTYLEDONEAE

Hydrocharitaceae

Halophila ovalis (R. Br.) Hook. Stranded on Meeyip I., April.

Cyperaeeae (Sedges)

Carex fascicularis Soland et Brott. Belts of this seasonal sedge occur intermittently with Juneus maritimus on the margins of the delta channels, and are green in the spring and summer, but die back and are dry and brown in the autumn and winter.

Galmia trifida Labill. Culcenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Lepidosperma longitudinale Labill. Culcenup I.

Scirpus nodosus Rottb. Culeenup I.

Schoenus calostachyus (R. Br.) Poir. Culeenup I.

Schoemus fascicularis Nees. Culeenup I.

Restionaceae

Leptocarpus coangustatatus Nees. Culeenup I.
Leptocarpus aristatus R. Br. (\Q inflorescenee in April). Tussocks
near the Salt Lake on Culeenup I.

Liliaceae

Arthropodium capillipes Endl. (April). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is. Chamaescilla corymbosa (R. Br.) F. Muell. (Blue Squill; August). Culeenup I.

Corynotheca micrantha (Lindl.) Macbride, (April). Culeenup I. Lomandra snaveolens (Endl.) Ewart. (Mat Rush; April). Culcenup I.

Juneus maritimus Lam. (Shore Rush). Fringing the banks of the delta channels, Culeenup and Jegarnyeejip Is.

Juncus pallidus R. Br. (Giant Rush). Jeegarnyeejip and Meeyip Is.

Amaryllidaeeae

Anigosanthos viridis Endl. (Green Kangaroo Paw; September). Cule-

Conostylis aculeata R. Br. (Cotton-heads; August). Culcenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Iridaceae

Patersonia occidentalis R. Br. (Native Iris, Fish Flower; Oetober, November). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Orehidaeeae

Caladenia deformis R. Br. (Blue Fairy; July, August). Culeenup I. Caladenia flava R. Br. (Cowslip; July, August). Culcenup I.

DICOTYLEDONEAE

Casuarinaceae

Casuarina obesa Miq. (= glanca auett.). (Swamp Oak). Fringing the delta channels.

Proteaceae

Banksia littoralis R. Br. (Swamp Banksia; April, May). Isolated groves on Culeenup I.

Conospermum triplinervium R. Br. (Smoke Bush). Culeenup I.

Hakea prostrata R. Br. Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Hakea varia R. Br. (Variable-leaved Hakea). Culeenup and Jeegarnveeiip Is.

Santalaceae

Exocarpos sparteus R. Br. (Broom Ballart). Culcenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Loranthaeeae

Lysiana casnarinae (Miq.) Tiegh. (Sheoak Mistletoe; April). Parasitic on Casuarina obesa, Culcenup 1.

Chenopodiaceae

Arthrocnemum bidens Nees. Salt Lake, Culeenup I.

Arthrocnemum halocnemoides Nees, var. halocnemoides. (Shrubby Glasswort). Salt Lake, Culcenup I.

Arthrocnemum halocnemoides Nees, var. pergranulatum Black. Jeegarnyeejip 1.

Arthrocneuum sp. (undescribed). Salt Lake Culcenup I. Atriplex hypoleuca Nees. Meeyip 1.

Atriplex patula L. Meeyip I.

Rhagodia parabolica R. Br. (Mealy Saltbush; April). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Salicornia quinqueflora Ung.-Sternb. Salt Lake, Culeenup I.

Amarantaceae

Alternanthera nodiflora R. Br. (Joyweed; April). Culeenup 1., by Old Mill.

Aizoaceae

Carpobrotus aequilaterus (Haw.) N.E.Br. (Pigface). Culeenup and Jecgarnyeejip Is.

Tetragonia decumbens Mill. Meeyip 1.

Lauraceae

Cassytha racemosa Nees. (Native Dodder). Culeenup and Jeegarn-yeejip Is.

Crueiferae

Cakile maritima Scop. (Sea Rocket; April). Meeyip I.

Mimosaceae

Acacia cyanophylla Lindl. (Orange Wattle). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is. Acacia pulchella R.Br. (Prickly Moses). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Papilionaceae

Dillwynia dillwynioides (Meissn.) Druee. (Orange flowers, July, August). Culeenup I.

Gompholobium tomentosum Labill. Culeenup I.

Hardeubergia comptoniana Benth. (Wild Sarsaparilla, Native Wistaria; July, August). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Jacksonia furcellata (Bonpl.) D.C. (Stinkwood; April). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Jacksonia sternbergiana Hueg. (Stinkwood; April, June, July). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Viminaria denudata Sm. (Golden Spray; November). Culeenup I.

Sapindaceae

Dodonaea attennata A. Cunn. (Native Hop). Jeegarnyeejip I.

Frankeniaceae

Frankenia pauciflora R.Br. (Common Sea Heath; April). Culeenup I. by Salt Lake.

Myrtaeeae

Eucalyptus rudis Endl. (Flooded Gum; August). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Kunzea ericifolia Reiehb. (Spearwood; November). Culeenup and Jee-

garnyeejip Is.

Melaleuca hamulosa Turez. Culeenup I. (near Salt Lake), Meeyip I. Melaleuca incana R.Br. (Grey Honey-Myrtle; June). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is., in the ephemeral freshwater swamps.

Melaleuca rhaphiophylla Schau. (Swamp Paper-bark). One of the bigger trees on the margins of the delta channels and in damp places on all the islands.

Epacridaceae

Brachyloma preissii Sond. Jeegarnyeejip I.

Primulaeeae

Samolus repens (Forst.) Pers. (November). Culeenup I.

Solanaeeae

Anthocercis littorea Labill. (Yellow Tail-flower; April, June, July, August). Culcenup I.

Myoporaceae

Myoporum oppositifolium R.Br. (April). Culeenup I.

Lobeliaceae

Lobelia anceps Thunb. (April). Culcenup I.

Goodeniaceae

Dampiera trigona de Vriese. (July, August). Culcenup I. Goodenia filiformis R.Br. (April). Culcenup I.

Compositae

Waitzia citrina (Benth.) Steetz. (Yellow Everlasting; Oetober, November). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Introduced Plants

MONOCOTYLEDONEAE

Iridaceae

Watsonia ?teipoldtii L. Bolus. (Watsonia). Dense stands on parts of Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is., near the river channels. Aerial parts die off during the summer.

DICOTYLEDONEAE

Chenopodiaceae

Chenopodium murale L. (Goosefoot). Culeenup 1.

Papilionaceae

Melilotus indica (L.) All. (King Island Melilot) Culeenup I., near Old

Apiaceae

Erynginm pinnatifidum Bunge. (Blue Devil). Jeegarnycejip 1.

Scrophulariaceae

Perentucellia viscosa (L.) Caruel. (Stieky Bartsia; April). Jeegarnyeejip

Asteraceae

Aster subulatus Miehx. (Bushy Starwort; April). Culcenup 1. Arctotheca calendula (L.) Levyns. (Capeweed). Culcenup 1. Hypochoeris radicata L. (Flatweed Dandelion). Culeenup 1. Innla graveolens (L.) Desf. (Stinkwort; April). Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Sea-weeds

On the strand at Meeyip I., the following two species of Brown Scaweeds were collected in April: Cystophora uvifera (Ag.) J. Ag., Cystoseira abrotanifolia Ag.

BIRDS

The following 74 species have been recorded on Culeenup 1. and its vicinity between November 1967 and April 1970 by the following observers: Max Bailey, John Dell, Brian Hutchison, Ian Edgar, A. G. Mathews, L. Milhineh, D.R. Reid, L. E. Sedgwick and D. L. Serventy:

Peliean, Pelecanns conspicillatus.—Up to 15-20 birds may be seen in the channels and in larger numbers on sand flats at the entrance to Peel

Inlet.

Black Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*.—A few birds constantly seen flying over Culcenup I., individuals with white flank patches in April.

Little Black Cormorant, P. sulcirostris.—Seen throughout the year, and flights pass over the islands in the evening to roosting sites. Occasionally large flocks over the shallows in adjoining parts of Peel Inlet.

Pied Cormorant, P. varius.—A few individuals roosting on sandbanks

at mouth of delta.

Little Pied Cormorant, P. melanoleucos.—Seen throughout the year; in the evenings large flocks flying to roosts upstream from Peel Inlet.

Australian Darter, Auhinga rufa.—A few birds seen throughout the

year in the channels.

White Egret, Egretta alba.—Odd birds throughout the year in fringe vegetation in river channels.

White-faced Heron, Ardea novae-hollandiae.—An occasional bird to

be seen at most times of the year. Nankeen Night-Heron, Nycticorax caledonicus.—Immature and adult

birds occasionally seen in bank vegetation; heard calling at night.

Straw-necked Ibis, *Threskiornis spinicollis.*—A flock of c. 40 flew over Culcenup I. in July (1968).

Mountain Duck, *Tadorna tadornoides.*—9 individuals on sandbanks

off delta in April 1969.

Black Duck, Anas snperciliosa.—A few birds in river channels; 13 on

Salt Lake in April 1969.

Grey Teal, A gibberifrons.—A few near river banks and on delta banks (January, April).

Musk Duck, Biziura lobata.—One in river channel, January 1968. Whistling Eagle, Haliastur sphenurus,—Oceasionally seen eircling overhead, April, May.

Osprey, Pandiou haliaetus.—Once in Peel Inlet, off Culeenup 1., April

1969. Dusky Moorhen, Gallinula tenebrosa.—An occasional bird encountered in the channels and fringe vegetation, January—May.

Western Swamp-hen, *Porphyrio porphyrio*.—A few individuals in fringe vegetation along channel banks, January—April.

Coot, Fulica atra.—An oceasional individual in river channels, April

and May.

Red-eapped Dotterel, Charadrius alexandriuns.-On sandbanks off delta islands, April.

Bar-tailed Godwit, Limosa lapponica.—c. 50-60 birds on sand banks

off Culeenup I., April 1970.

Common Sandpiper, Tringa lypoleucos.—Single birds on ehannel banks, January.

Greenshank, T. nebularia.—Heard ealling over Culeenup I., and seen in river channels and delta flats, January—May.

Red-neeked Stint, Erolia ruficollis.—On the Salt Lake and delta flats. White-headed Stilt, Himantopus himantopus.—A flock of e. 50 on delta sandbanks, April 1969.

Avoeet, Recurvirostra uovaehollandiae.—On delta sandbanks, up to

40; April, August.

Silver Gull, Larus novaehollandiae.—A few birds throughout the year in river channels.

Marsh Tern, Chlidonias hybrida,—c. 50 in Peel Inlet off Culcenup

I., April 1969, and c. 100 in April 1970.

Caspian Tern, Hydroprogue caspia.—A few birds occasionally fly along river channels and over adjoining flats off delta. Crested Tern, Sterna bergii.—A few occasionally fly up and down the

ehannels.

Fairy Tern, S. nereis.—A few birds on sand banks off Culeenup I., April 1969.

Common Bronzewing, Phaps chalcoptera.—One individual flushed on

Jeegarnyeejip I., April (1969 and 1970).

Purple-erowned Lorikeet, Glossopsitta porphyrocephala.—A floek passed over Culeenup I., January 1968.

White-tailed Black Cockatoo, Calyptorhynchus baudini.—Heard calling on Culcenup I., in pine trees, May 1968.

King Parrot, Purpureicephalus spurius.—Noted on Culcenup 1., between April and June (1968, 1969 and 1970).

Twentyeight Parrot, Barnardius zonarius.—A few on Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is, between April and July (1968, 1969 and 1970).

Golden Bronze Cuckoo, Chrysococcyx plagosus.—Heard ealling on

Culeenup I., January 1968 and August 1969.

Fan-tailed Cuekoo, Cacomantis flabelliformis.—Birds trilling fairly persistently on Culeenup I. between April and August (1968, 1969 and 1970).

Tawny Frogmouth, *Podargus strigoides*,—One seen hunting at dawn,

Culeenup I., April 1970.

Kookaburra, Dacelo gigas.—Heard and seen oceasionally.

Saered Kingfisher, Haleyon sauctus.—Odd individuals seen and heard on Culcenup I. between November and January (1967, 1968 and 1969).

Rainbow-bird, Merops ornatus.—Passing over Culcenup I. in January

(1968, 1969).

Weleome Swallow, Hirando neoxena.—Throughout the year, in small numbers, hunting over river channels.

Tree-Martin, Petrochelidon nigricans.—A few eireling overhead, April -May and in August.

Australian Pipit, Anthus novaescelandiae.—Sometimes seen flying over islands.

Black-faced Cuekoo-Shrike, Coracina novueltollandiae.—One or two at most times of the year.

Little Grass-bird, Megalnrus gramineus.—Once heard calling in sam-

phires by the Old Mill, Culeenup 1., November 1967.

Banded Blue Wren, Malurus splendens.—Regularly present on Culeen-

up I., several separate groups. Also on Jeegarnycejip and Meeyip Is. Western Warbler, Gerygone fusca.—May be heard singing at any time of the year.

Broad-tailed Thornbill, Acanthiza apicalis,—The common thornbill of the islands, met with throughout the year, usually in pairs.

Western Thornbill, A. inornata,—Recorded once on Culeenup I.,

January 1968.

Yellow-tailed Thornbill, A. chrysorrhoa,—Noted in January and in flocks in April and May.

Spotted Scrub-Wren, Sericornis maculatus.—In the dense thickets by the Salt Lake, Culcenup I., and also on Jeegarnyeejip I.

White-fronted Chat, Epthianura albifrons.—A few noted on Meeyip I., April 1970.

Searlet Robin, Petroica multicolor.—Regularly seen or heard, Culeenup and Jeegarnycejip Is.

Grey Fantail, Rhipidura fuliginosa.—Heard or seen throughout the

year on Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Willy Wagtail, R. leucophrys.—One or two birds may usually be encountered at any time of the year on Culcenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.; but less consistently than the previous species.

Restless Flycatcher, Seisura inquieta.—One noted Culcenup I., April

Golden Whistler, Pachycephala pectoralis.—Occasionally seen, January to May, particularly in the dense thickets near the Salt Lake, Culcen-

Rufous Whistler, P. rufiventris.—Seen or heard singing throughout

the year.

Western Shrike-Thrush, Colluricincla rufiventris.—Heard singing, April, May.

Black-capped Sittella, Neositta pileata,—A flock encountered once on

Culcenup I., May 1969.

Mistletoe-bird, Dicaeum hirundinaceum,-Seen or heard calling frequently in the summer and autumn.

Red-tipped Diamond-bird, Pardalotus substriatus,-Heard ealling at

irregular intervals.

Western Silvereye, Zosterops gouldi.—Frequently seen or heard; also

noted on Jeegarnyeejip and Meeyip Is.

Brown Honcycater, Lielunera indistincta.—Generally present; the song is very conspicuous among the bird sounds between August and November.

Singing Honeyeater, Meliphaga virescens.—Noted at the North Yundurup boat landing, at the Old Mill, and on Lot 26, but not common. New Holland Honeyeater, Phylidonyris novaehollaudiae.—A party

once noted on Culeenup I. in April 1969. Seen on Jeegarnycejip I., April 1970 and past season's nest found.

Red Wattle-bird, Anthochaera carunculata.—Heard on Culcenup I.

at most times of the year.

Magpie-Lark, Grallina cyanoleuca.—Birds seen occasionally, January,

April, May, June, November.

Dusky Wood-Swallow, Artamus cyanopterus.—Parties oceasionally fly over Culcenup I., April, May.

Singing at most times of the

Grey Butcher-bird, Cracticus torquatus.—Singing at most times of the

Western Magpie, Gymnorlina dorsalis.—Resident on Culcenup I., not known how many territorial groups exist; one uses the water tower on Lot 31 as a singing station.

Raven, Corvus coronoides,—Noted all the year round.

REPTILES

No special studies have been undertaken, but the following species have been recorded so far:

Tortoises

Long-necked Tortoise, Chelodina oblouga,—One seen in Jeegarnyeejip Branch in January 1968.

Snakes

Dugite, Demansia nuchalis.—Occasionally recorded by island residents; one was killed on Culeenup I. in November 1969.

Lizards

Jew Lizard, Amphibolurus barbatus.—One seen on Culeenup I. on August 27, 1969.

King's Skink, Egernia kingii.—One collected on Culeenup I. from a hole in the floor of a cottage on Lot 26 on April 12, 1970.

New Holland Skink, Leiolepisma trilineatum.—One specimen collected on Culcenup I. by John Dell in April 1970 and seen on Jeegarnycejip I. among litter on levee banks near the samphire flat.

Tree Skink, Ablepharus boutonii.—One collected on Culecnup I. near Lot 26 in April 1970; juvenile seen on trunk of a Flooded Gum (J. Dell).

INVERTEBRATES

Insects

The ants have been most studied. On May 22, 1969, Mr. Athol Douglas of the W.A. Museum, made an initial survey of the bull-ants (Myrmecia) on Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is. On the latter Myrmecia vindex was very plentiful, and at one place, within an area of 12 ft. by 7 ft., 11 nests were found on a levce bank close to the water. This was the highest concentration of nests of this species he had ever encountered. Two nests of M. nigriscapa were also found on this island. Culcenup I. was examined in more detail during the April 1970 visit. M. vindex was again found to be very common, the nest concentrations being greater than is usually found on the mainland. All were on levee banks, but those on the lower slopes were built up high, like volcanoes. A second Myrmecia species, of the arnoldi/nigriceps group, with debris, including rabbit dung, on the mound, also occurred. Other ant species noted included: Iridomyrmex purpureus, Rhytidoponera convexa, Campanotus claripes (which had taken over a mound of the termite, Coptotermes), C. nigriceps and a species of Melophorus.

Two carth-dwelling termite species were found on Culeenup I.: Coptotermes acinaciformis and Nasutitermes exitiosus.

"Spitfire" caterpillars of the notodontid moth, Antimima cryptica, were plentiful on both Culeenup and Jeegarnycejip Is., in April 1970 on Jacksonia furcellata, to which host plant they were almost entirely restricted. On Culcenup I. the Cabbage White Butterfly (Pieris rapae) was

Several males of the Feather-horned Beetle, Rhipidocera femoralis, were flying around in a Viminaria denudata thicket on Culeenup I. in April 1970.

Fresh-water Crustacca

Remains of the Koonac, Cherax preissi, were frequent in sub-swampy places on Culeenup and Jeegarnyeejip Is.

Mollusca

The gastropod, Coxiella glabra (see Macpherson, W. Aust. Nat., 5, 1957: 199) was exceedingly abundant in wind-rows on the margins of the Salt Lake on Culcenup I. (collected on April 12, 1970, when the lake was dry). This represents an extension of range for the species and is the first time it has been found on the Swan Coastal Plain.

A number of aestivating juvenile specimens of a species of Austrosuccinea were found by Miss V. M. Bristowe under the bark of a fallen Flooded Gum in a sub-swampy part of Culeenup I. on April 11, 1970.

The mollusca were identified by Mr. G. W. Kendrick, of the W.A. Museum.

-D. L. S.